

WHITE HOUSE
FAITH-BASED
AND
COMMUNITY
INITIATIVES

COMPASSION
IN ACTION

ROUNDTABLE

*Community and
Faith-Based Solutions
for Immigrant Assimilation
and Success*



September 17, 2008

INTRODUCTION

In January 2007, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) launched a series of monthly Compassion in Action Roundtable meetings to highlight organizations, programs and policies addressing critical social needs. The roundtables convene and facilitate discussion between policymakers, government officials, philanthropists, and faith-based and community service providers around targeted issues.

The events reveal the President’s Initiative as a broad-based, community-centered reform agenda, showcase innovative projects and promising practices, and draw attention to government efforts to expand and support the work of faith-based and community organizations actively engaged in serving their neighbors and communities.

Today’s event highlights community and faith-based solutions for immigrant assimilation and success. America is a Nation made vibrant by immigrants. Those venturing to the United States—although often arriving destitute—carry a keen hope, creativity, and industry that refreshes our Nation’s vision and enriches our economy, culture and communities.

However, those on the journey toward citizenship often face great challenges—from cultural and language barriers to immediate food and shelter needs. For immigrants of every generation, faith-based and other community organizations have been the primary doorway to overcoming these difficulties and entering the full opportunity of America.

The heart of President Bush’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative is to strengthen these groups and ensure that they are the central players in Federal efforts to address human need.

COMMUNITY AND FAITH-BASED SOLUTIONS
FOR IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION AND SUCCESS

COMPASSION
IN ACTION
ROUNDTABLE

September 17, 2008 9:30 am – 11:30 am

- 9:30 a.m.

Welcome and Introduction
Jedd E. Medefind, Special Assistant to the President and Acting Director,
White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
- 9:40 a.m.

Keynote Remarks: The Importance of Immigrant Assimilation for American Democracy
Alfonso Aguilar, Chief
Office of Citizenship, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- 9:55 a.m.

Panel Discussion: Effective Assimilation Strategies in Local Communities
Moderator: Tamar Jacoby, President, Immigration Works

Panelist: Sherri Crawford, President, Project Light

Panelist: Christopher Koehler, Director of ESL Program, St. James Cathedral

Panelist: Mark Hetfield, Senior Vice President for Program and Policy Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Panelist: Dr. Robert Ponichtera, Founder and Executive Director, Liberty's Promise
- 10:25 a.m.

Panel Discussion: Effective Strategies for Supporting New Beginnings
Moderator: David H. Siegel, Acting Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children & Families (~~ACF~~)
U.S. ~~Dept.~~ of Health & Human Services (~~HHS~~)

Panelist: Dr. Barbara Eiswerth, Director, Iskashitaa Refugee Harvesting Network

Panelist: Jennifer Sporzynski, Director, Start Smart, Coastal Enterprises Inc.

Panelist: Ralston H. Deffenbaugh Jr., President
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (~~LIRS~~)
- 10:55 a.m.

President's Volunteer Service Award
Presented to "REEP Outreach ESL Volunteer Teachers"
Accepted by Nancy Ferguson, Kathy Morland and Karl Van Newkirk
- 11:05 a.m.

Compassion Spotlight
Ms. Zarghouna Noori
- 11:20 a.m.

Closing Remarks
Jedd E. Medefind, Special Assistant to the President and Acting Director
White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

FEDERAL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION AND SUCCESS

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Task Force on New Americans

Created in June 2006 by President George W. Bush, the Task Force on New Americans is an inter-agency effort to help immigrants learn English, embrace the common core of American civic culture, and fully become American. The Task Force works to develop a more cooperative federal approach to assimilation, one of the five pillars of the President's comprehensive immigration reform plan.

Established within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Secretary Michael Chertoff serves as Chair of the Task Force and Jonathan "Jock" Scharfen, Acting Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), serves as Executive Secretary. Task Force membership includes representatives from 12 Cabinet-level departments and a technical working committee of eight additional federal agencies.

Since June 2006, the Task Force on New Americans has been working to develop inter-agency initiatives to help immigrants settle in their new country and maximize the use of federal resources in promoting integration. By providing technical resources to communities and organizations, encouraging volunteerism, developing effective training methods, and conducting targeted research efforts, the Task Force seeks to encourage successful immigrant integration in a comprehensive manner.

Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL)

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) conducts long-term outreach and engagement initiatives with several key communities across the U.S. at both the national and local levels. CRCL is committed to engaging American Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian communities in addition to other stakeholders.

CRCL operates on the conviction that we cannot effectively fulfill the DHS mission to secure the nation while preserving our freedoms without actively and fully consulting with these groups whose interests lie at the very nexus of civil rights and national security. Thus, in regular meetings with religious and community leaders in major cities like Washington DC, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Boston, and Houston, CRCL serves as a point of inquiry and redress for individuals concerned about their rights as Americans.

CRCL encourages regular participation by colleagues from across the Department and the Federal government in these meetings, and frequently hosts high-level local, state and Federal officials as guest speakers. In these and other forums, CRCL has begun to reach out to and include the many new immigrant populations that fall under the rubric of our ongoing engagement efforts, particularly refugees and asylees from the conflicts in Somalia, Iraq and Sudan.

CRCL believes it is in our long-term interests as a nation to ensure the positive integration of individuals from these new immigrant communities into the fabric of American cultural and political life.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Refugee Resettlement

Founded on the belief that newly arriving populations have inherent capabilities when given opportunities, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society. The Office of Refugee Resettlement provides assistance to refugees, asylees, Cuban-Haitian entrants, human trafficking victims, unaccompanied alien children, and other eligible persons through its various programs and grants, so that they can achieve self-sufficiency and integration within the shortest time period after arriving in the United States. Some of the refugee benefits and services include, but are

not limited to, the following: cash assistance, medical assistance, employability services, English language instruction, on-the-job training, transportation, day care, translation/interpretation, skills certification, case management, and citizenship and employment authorization document assistance.

U.S. Department of Justice

The Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program
The Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program is designed to strengthen civil and criminal legal assistance for victims of sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence through innovative, collaborative programs. These programs provide victims - - including migrant and alien women - - with representation and legal advocacy in family, immigration, administrative agency, or housing matters, protection or stay-away order proceedings, and other similar matters. The Legal Assistance Program is intended to increase the availability of civil and criminal legal assistance in order to provide effective aid to victims who are seeking relief in legal matters arising as a consequence of abuse or violence.

Office on Violence Against Women
The STOP (Services • Training • Officers • Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (STOP Program) (OVW)

The STOP Program promotes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to improving the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes against women. The STOP Program encourages the development and strengthening of effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to address violent crimes against women and the development and strengthening of victim services in cases involving violent crimes against women. Included in the scope of the program is providing assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in immigration matters.

The Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program (Arrest Program) (OVW)

The Arrest Program recognizes that domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are crimes that require the criminal justice system to hold offenders accountable for their actions through investigation, arrest, and prosecution of violent offenders, and through close judicial scrutiny and management of offender behavior. Included in the scope of program is strengthening legal advocacy service programs (including language translation) for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking including strengthening assistance to such victims in

The Office of Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices of the Civil Rights Division

Public Education Program
~~(The Office of Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices of the Civil Rights Division)~~ The purpose of this program is to support public education programs on the rights of alien workers who may become victims of employment discrimination and the responsibilities of employers under the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) 8 U.S.C. §1324b

Office for Victims of Crime
Services for Trafficking Victims Program (Office for Victims of Crime)

This program assists victim service providers to provide trafficking victims with their basic needs for shelter, food, and clothing as well as case management, information and referral, legal assistance and advocacy, medical and dental services, mental health assessment and treatment, job skills training, transportation, and interpretation services.

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)

Each year, the United States admits tens of thousands of refugees for permanent resettlement. The U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) administers and monitors U.S. contributions to international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to assist and protect refugees abroad. In overseeing admissions of refugees to the United States for permanent resettlement, the Bureau works closely with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Department of Health and Human Services, and various state and private voluntary

Reception and Placement (R&P) Program

In particular, the PRM Bureau manages the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program for the initial resettlement of refugees in the United States. The purpose of the program is to promote the successful resettlement of all persons who are admitted to the United States under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Each refugee approved for admission to the United States is sponsored by one of ten resettlement agencies participating in the R&P Program under a cooperative agreement with the Department of State. The sponsoring agency is responsible for placing refugees with one of its affiliated offices and for providing initial services, which include housing, essential furnishings, food, clothing, community orientation, and referral to other social, medical and employment services, for the refugees' first 30-90 days in the United States. The R&P Program is a public-private partnership, which anticipates that sponsoring agencies will contribute significant cash and/or in-kind resources to supplement U.S. Government funding for the program.

Although refugees are eligible for public assistance when they first arrive, the U.S. Government emphasizes early economic self-sufficiency through employ-

ment to speed their integration into American society. During the refugees' initial transition period, programs funded by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement and administered either by the states or resettlement agencies provide cash and medical assistance, employment services, English language training, and other support services.

Refugees are admitted to the United States by the Department of Homeland Security. After twelve months of residency, refugees are required to apply for adjustment of status to that of permanent resident alien. After five years in the United States, refugees may apply for citizenship.

The voluntary agencies participating in the Refugee Admissions Reception and Placement Program in FY2008 are: Church World Service; Episcopal Migration Ministries; Ethiopian Community Development Council; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services; International Rescue Committee; Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; and World Relief.

PRM has also led the State Department's efforts to expand humanitarian opportunities for United Nations agencies and NGOs to respond to humanitarian needs of Iraqi refugees. USAID programs support thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Iraq and other at-risk beneficiaries through activities such as provision of emergency relief supplies, water systems, and infrastructure rehabilitation for host communities, small-scale livelihood activities, and support for mobile medical teams and emergency health. Almost \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance for displaced Iraqis in Iraq and neighboring states has been given by the U.S. Government since 2003. The United States has been the largest contributor to programs assisting displaced Iraqis since 2003, funding programs for food, health, education, water and sanitation, emergency shelter and protection.

FBCI SNAPSHOTS:
PRIVATE EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE
IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION AND SUCCESS

The United States remains committed to meeting the target of resettling 12,000 of the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees by September 30, 2008. Between October 1, 2007 and May 31, 2008, 4,742 Iraqis were resettled in the United States as refugees. In addition, 636 Iraqis received Special Immigrant Visas between October 1, 2007 and April 30, 2008.

U.S. Agency for International Development

~~Reflecting the best humanitarian traditions of the American people, the U.S. Government funds protection and life-sustaining relief for millions of refugees and victims of conflict around the globe. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds numerous international programs that encourage conflict mitigation, peace and reconciliation, economic growth, and better living conditions to address refugee situations in the countries in which it works. In addition, through the Global Development Alliance, USAID is seeking to better leverage the development impact of remittances from immigrant populations in the U.S.~~

Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI); Smart Start

CEI is a private, nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with roots in the civil rights movement. Founded in 1977, the organization provides financing and support in the development of job-creating small businesses, natural resources industries, community facilities, and affordable housing. CEI's primary market is Maine, but, in recent years, has expanded several of its financing programs to northern New England, upstate New York and beyond.

StartSmart started in 1997 to support the start-up and expansion of refugee and immigrant owned businesses while honoring the social, educational and economic interests of a diverse and growing population. StartSmart plays an essential role in helping New Americans who are economically disadvantaged and who need individualized assistance to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers that limit their ability to participate in the mainstream economy. Although StartSmart participants enter the program with a range of needs, they all want to generate income for themselves and their families. Small business ownership offers opportunities not available to them through more traditional employment.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

~~HIAS~~, the international migration agency of the American Jewish community, is dedicated to providing rescue and refuge for persecuted and oppressed Jews around the world. In recent years, as the population of Jewish refugees has thankfully diminished, we continue to assist our own where needed. Yet, driven by the Jewish mandate to "help the stranger," we also have directed our expertise to assist refugees and immigrants of all backgrounds and to help many reunite with their families and resettle in the United States. Our direct service work is ever strengthened by our advocacy in Congress for fair and effective policies affecting refu-

gees and immigrants. Since 1881, HIAS has assisted more than 4,500,000 people worldwide.

HIAS provides protection and assistance to some of the most endangered populations around the world. Currently we are working in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Depending on location, these services can include trauma counseling, art therapy, legal advice, and humanitarian assistance, among others. In addition, we assist refugees from more than 20 countries with U.S. resettlement and follow through with immigrant integration and citizenship programs. In all we do, we work closely with the U.S. government, foreign governments, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and a host of non-governmental organizations.

Iskash*Taa Refugee Harvesting Network

Iskash*taa Refugee Harvesting Network is a grass roots organization that helps in rebuilding refugees' lives. Through a 100% volunteer-based model, we unite refugees to the community. Iskash*taa has a number of unique programs designed to empower the refugees to use their knowledge and skills from their country of origin (i.e. agriculture through harvesting, tailoring, and crafts to help serve them in America. Iskash*taa has also worked to build a networking community among Tucson area refugee volunteers and agencies.

~~Besides harvesting,~~ Iskash*taa recruits and supports family mentors who tutor in English and literacy, connects refugee teens and adults with computers, provide assistance with job applications, and collects a wide variety of donations. Over the last five years, the program has grown with support of a grant from the Compassion Initiative through United Way, sponsorship through the Refugee Ministries of St Francis in the Foothills UMC, endowments, funds from many faith based organizations and private donations. With the help of the University of Arizona interns, Iskash*taa supports several microenterprise ~~unique~~ projects empowering refugees to use their knowledge

and skills from their country of origin (i.e. agriculture through harvesting, basket and loom weaving, sewing and tailoring, knitting, crocheting, and other crafts) to help serve them in America. Iskash*taa has worked to develop a more cohesive networked community serving Tucson area refugees, volunteers, and service providers.

~~TV2 Norway, an international television station from Norway, where many Somali refugees are resettled, filmed Iskashitaa refugees and volunteers, creating a documentary on what they consider to be one of the most successful refugee grassroots program they encountered in the America. In 2004, The International Rescue committee and the Somali Association of Arizona, honored Barbara as the Volunteer of the Year for her dedication and tireless service to refugees throughout Tucson. In January 2007 Iskashitaa. An invitation to Community- a documentary was premiered and is now used to educate and promote social justice among refugee groups. Dr. Eiswerth was a National Finalist in the Cooperate for Community for Sustainable Food contest, and recognized with the William Sears "Vision in Action Award" from the Baha'i Assembly of Southern Arizona. In 2007, Eiswerth received the National Garden Crusader Award for Feeding the Hungry, was a finalist in the Southern Arizona Community of Hearts, Community Builder Award, and the recipient of the Church Women United Nations Human Rights Award. Lastly, Iskashitaa was one of five finalists in the Compassion Initiative's "Portraits of Compassion video contest" this summer.~~

Volunteers and refugees harvest and redistribute donated foods to others in the neighborhood, host refugee markets, and donate to local causes including back to the four refugee settlement agencies in Tucson and over fifteen local non-profit organizations feeding the hungry in Tucson. Workshops called Fruit Mapping 101, Somali Tamale, and Fun with Fruit (food preservation) are designed to diminish fruit waste

in Tucson by teaching youth and others to identify community food resources by recording the locations of fruit trees and gardens, learning about food security, training in food preservation and nutrition of local foods. In addition, they have integrated projects including marketing refugee's goods, basket and loom weaving program, knitting, crocheting, sewing and tailoring project, and a refugee mentoring program. After a number of near drowning incidents, Iskashitaa initiated a city wide pool safety and swim program for refugees from around the world. During all of our project activities we are educating Tucson about the refugee community on their way to citizenship.

Liberty's Promise

Liberty's Promise supports young immigrants in need while encouraging them to be active and conscientious American citizens. Our programs aim to make the immigrant experience an affirmative one for young newcomers while instilling in them a sense of pride and support for American ideals of democracy and freedom. By doing so, Liberty's Promise seeks to reaffirm our fundamental egalitarian and democratic traditions for future generations.

Lutheran Immigration and Relief Services

Welcoming Newcomers for Decades
In a nation built by immigrants, LIRS has carried on the Lutheran tradition of welcoming newcomers since 1939. In the spirit of our mission and the American way, we have answered the call to serve those who cannot go home and to assist those seeking new life in a new land. With initiative and resourcefulness, LIRS has sought creative and lasting solutions to the needs of uprooted people.

Bringing New Hope and New Life
LIRS lights the way to the future for immigrants, refugees and those seeking protection from countries where war and oppression have stolen their hope and threatened their very existence. We resettle refugees,

reunite families and rekindle dreams. Since its founding, LIRS has given hundreds of thousands of people a new start in the United States.

Called to Act Boldly, with Courage and Compassion
Compelled by our faith in God and our commitment to preserve the dignity of human life, we act boldly on behalf of adults, children and families to ensure their fair and ethical treatment. LIRS is a leader in serving unaccompanied refugee children, advocating for fair public policies, and championing the cause of people who are imprisoned while seeking asylum in the U.S. With courage, integrity and compassion, we are called to support the vulnerable, speak for the voiceless and protect the defenseless.

Reaching Broadly, Serving Locally
LIRS bridges borders to welcome newcomers to America. We assist those who are putting down new roots and reaching for new opportunities throughout our nation. Our local resettlement affiliates, our asylum and immigration partners, our network of international partners, and our enthusiastic circle of congregations and volunteers are the hands, feet and heart of our mission. LIRS extends a welcome to people in need, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religious beliefs.

Building America's Communities
By assisting newcomers and working with employers to create job opportunities, we stimulate a cycle of community growth and prosperity. As they establish their own new lives, those we serve make immeasurable contributions to our communities by building businesses, creating jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods, fueling the economy, building the tax base and enriching the culture. A sound steward of its own resources, LIRS is a catalyst for the economic well-being of communities throughout our nation.

Project Light

Project Light provides unique, software-based tutoring systems for literacy, English as a Second Language, and GED preparation. Project Light's proven one-to-one approach allows anybody who can read at a sixth grade level or higher to successfully teach another person to read. The educational content used in Project Light's programs was created by Ph.D. literacy experts and validated by the U.S. Department of Education. Over 500 learning centers using Project Light literacy software have been launched.

Project Light learning centers are located across the United States and in 35 other countries worldwide. Project Light was founded in 1980 by Jim Crawford. It is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia. Thousands of students' lives have been transformed by learning to read using Project Light!

St. James English as a Second Language Program

The St. James English as a Second Language Program (SJESL) is a 501(c)(3), non-sectarian, volunteer and community-based organization that provides free English instruction and Citizenship assistance to low-income adult refugees and immigrants in Seattle and King County, Washington.

Founded in 1975 with one tutor and one Vietnamese student, SJESL has grown to serve students from 37 countries in all parts of the world. In 2004-2005, 120 volunteers provided 150 students with 8,000 hours of English instruction. The St. James ESL Program is an Accredited Affiliate of ProLiteracy of America.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE
IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION AND SUCCESS

Express Care

Express Care is a humanitarian organization that provides information and assistance to those in need, offering a support network that is often lacking. A non-profit organization with 501 (c) (3) status, Express Care is located in Herndon, Virginia. The aims and objectives of Express Care are: 1. To provide access to health care, 2. To provide health education, to prevent diseases, 3. To work towards the goal of healthy families 2020, 4. To improve the quality of life of women and children.

The aims and goals for the development of our community are to:

- Assess health needs and make referrals to existing programs to ensure that every woman and child has a medical home.
- Educate the community through individualized as well as group instructions in preventing measures to improved health and extend the quality of life using television, internet and other means of communication.
- Advocate and promote self-sufficiency through employment, education and economic empowerment for men and women and to provide social support.
- Assist individuals to understand the cultural practices and to help them in developing skills including language and driving skills that are needed to successfully participate in the society.

REEP (Arlington Education & Employment Program) Outreach ESL

Since 1994, REEP has been coordinating English classes for Arlington County's Community Outreach Program, which seeks to promote self-sufficiency and community belonging for new immigrants and low income residents by providing multicultural, neighborhood-based educational programs and services.

Designed to bring services to the neighborhoods, Outreach ESL is a unique component of the REEP program. Working out of three centers, Outreach ESL provides free, drop-in classes to neighborhood residents and other adults, for whom more intensive study is not possible. Supported and trained by REEP staff, a team of 40-45 volunteer teachers provide 58 hours of ESL instruction per week in the morning, evening, and even on weekends.

This year alone, REEP's generous volunteer teachers have donated over 2,500 hours planning and teaching the classes. For many of the Outreach ESL students, these classes are their first exposure to any English training. With their boundless supply of patience and their dedication, these volunteers have a way of putting students at ease and coming back for more!

Teaching at the outreach centers is not without challenges. Classes are multi-level and run on a drop-in basis. Attendance varies week to week. Nonetheless, our creative and flexible volunteers transform these challenges into a rewarding experience for students and teachers alike.

The volunteers design dynamic lessons that develop the students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities through real life contexts such as health, work, and consumerism. Students leave the classes each day with more English skills, knowledge of U.S. customs and institutions, and better equipped to integrate into and succeed in U.S. society.

Individually, and as a group, the REEP Outreach ESL Volunteer Teachers truly have an impact. Providing a comfortable learning environment, the volunteers empower adult students to move on to more intensive programs of study, better jobs, and ultimately, a better life in the United States. This remarkable group of volunteers serves as a link between newcomers who have so much to offer and the broader American public that has so much to gain from their presence here.

BIOGRAPHIES

Today the *President's Volunteer Service Award* will be awarded to the REEP Outreach ESL Volunteer Teachers for their dedicated service.

The President's Volunteer Service Award

America has a long and proud tradition of volunteer service. Now more than ever, volunteers are renewing their commitment to helping others and making new connections that bring us closer together as families, as neighbors, as communities, and as a Nation.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush issued a challenge to all Americans to make time to help their neighbors, communities, and Nation through service. He called on each person to dedicate at least 4,000 hours – or two years – to service over the course of their lives. He created the USA Freedom Corps to help all Americans answer his call to service and help foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility.

In 2003, President Bush created the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to find ways to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making in our Nation. The Council brings together leaders from the worlds of business, entertainment, sports, education, government, nonprofits, and the media.

The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation created the President's Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.

Recognizing and honoring volunteers sets a standard for service to others. It encourages a sustained commitment to civic participation and inspires others to make volunteering a central part of their lives. The President's Volunteer Service Award recognizes individuals, families, and groups that have achieved a certain standard – measured by the number of hours served over a 12-month period or cumulative hours earned over the course of a lifetime.

Today's recipients have earned the gold level award for groups having collectively served 1,000 hours or more in a year.

■ ALFONSO AGUILAR

Chief Office of Citizenship, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003, Alfonso Aguilar is the first Chief of the Office of Citizenship within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. As Chief of the Office of Citizenship, Mr. Aguilar is charged with leading efforts to promote an understanding of the civic principles on which this nation was founded and increase public awareness of the benefits and responsibilities associated with U.S. citizenship.

Under his leadership, the Federal government has reinvigorated assimilation efforts for the first time in nearly 100 years. Since 2003, the Office of Citizenship has developed products and initiatives that promote instruction and training on the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship and provide immigrants with information and tools necessary to successfully integrate into American civic culture. As Chair of the Task Force on New Americans' Technical Committee, an interagency Federal task force created by President George W. Bush, Mr. Aguilar is leading efforts to enhance and coordinate government-wide immigrant integration initiatives.

Mr. Aguilar joined U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, within the Department of Homeland Security, in 2003 after serving as Press Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the U.S. Agency for International Development. He joined the Bush Administration in May 2001, as Deputy Director of Public Affairs for the U.S. Department of Energy where he remained until August 2002.

Mr. Aguilar moved to Washington, D.C. in 2000 to serve as the Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration. In this capacity, he advised the Governor and other officials on issues, initiatives, and developments of importance to Puerto Rico. He also worked closely with members of the United

States Congress and others in key leadership positions promoting a better understanding of economic and cultural issues associated with the Caribbean island.

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Mr. Aguilar is the son of immigrants. He received his Bachelor of Arts and Letters in 1991 from the University of Notre Dame where he studied Government and International Studies, and later received his Juris Doctor in 1995 from the University of Puerto Rico. He is a member of the Puerto Rico Bar Association, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

■ SHERRI CRAWFORD

President
Project Light

Sherri Crawford is the president of Project Light. She has always had a heart for the poor and underprivileged. Before becoming a lawyer, Sherri loved volunteering by teaching English as a Second Language to El Salvadorian refugees seeking U. S. citizenship.

In 1996, Sherri started her career as a corporate intellectual property lawyer for software companies in Silicon Valley, and it was during this time that she intensified her volunteer involvement with under-privileged children and became a reading tutor for homeless children. Simultaneously, Sherri began seeking God as to how she could use her skill-set as a software lawyer to serve Him.

In 2000, Sherri took an opportunity to volunteer her time at the International Justice Mission and worked as a lawyer in Kenya, Africa. While visiting a school in the slums of Nairobi, she saw impoverished children: an image that she could not forget upon her return to the U.S., and one that would change her life forever.

Shortly after this experience, in 2002, Sherri joined the Board of Directors of Project Light, a non-profit

organization that partners with faith and community based organizations to implement the Project Light Tutoring Program and Software that meets literacy, ESL and GED needs world-wide. In 2004, Sherri relocated to Virginia to volunteer her time at Project Light as the acting Director of Operations and later as the President of the Ministry. Today Sherri is still actively practicing corporate law which gives her the opportunity to continue volunteering as the President of Project Light.

Sherri earned her B.A. from the University of Virginia and her J.D., from Santa Clara University School of Law. At Santa Clara University she served as the president of the Public Interest Law Foundation, was involved in the Christian Law Society, and was a comments editor for the school's Computer & High Technology Law Journal. Sherri also attended Oxford University, where she studied Jurisprudence.

■ RALLSTON H. DEFFENBAUGH JR.

*President
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*

Ralie Deffenbaugh has worked since 1981 with Lutheran organizations concerned with international affairs. A human rights lawyer, he has headed Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) since 1991.

After receiving a 1973 bachelor's in economics from the University of Colorado, Boulder, summa cum laude, and a 1977 law degree from Harvard, Deffenbaugh worked for a Denver law firm for three years before joining the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva in 1981. As assistant to the general secretary for legal and international affairs, he worked mainly on human rights advocacy and in-house legal matters. He was also the primary staff person for committees dealing with southern Africa and the LWF constitution.

In 1985 Deffenbaugh became the Director of the Lutheran Office for World Community in New York, the office that represents the LWF to the United Nations and conducts international affairs advocacy for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In 1989-90 the year of the transition to Namibian independence, he acted as legal advisor to the Namibian Lutheran Bishops in Windhoek, advising the bishops and the Council of Churches in Namibia on relations between the United Nations and the South Africans, and on how the independence plan was being implemented. He also served as an informal consultant to members of the committee drafting Namibia's constitution.

In 1991 Deffenbaugh accepted an invitation to become the chief executive officer of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the cooperative agency of the U.S. Lutheran churches working with refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and unaccompanied refugee children.

Deffenbaugh served for two years, 1990-91, as the first chair of the newly formed Refugee Council USA, the coalition of American voluntary organizations working in the field of refugee protection and service. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Deffenbaugh was a public member of the 1995, 1998 and 2000 U.S. delegations to the annual U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) Executive Committee meetings, and of the U.S. delegation to the special meeting in 2001 that marked the 50th anniversary of the U.N. Refugee Convention. He has also been an observer of political trials for Amnesty International, the Lutheran World Federation and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law. He has written extensively on the legal, moral and political aspects of resettlement.

Deffenbaugh and his wife, the former Miriam Boraas, have two children, Natalie and Carl.

■ DR. BARBARA EISWERTH

*Director
Iskashitaa Refugee Harvesting Network*

Dr. Barbara Eiswerth has dedicated her life to helping others. A girl scout from age seven, she has been involved in community service projects for the past 35 years. After completing her doctorate on soil erosion at the University of Arizona, Barbara has been instrumental in starting neighborhood food mapping projects throughout Tucson, using computer mapping technologies and teaching the refugee community about the local food system.

Barbara's original idea for locating, harvesting, and redistributing fruit from neighborhood trees came to her after working in Malawi as an environmental scientist for a US Agency for International Development project and seeing the great need for food security.

Barbara's initiation to refugees occurred in 2003 when one of the fruit mapping projects included many Somali and Russian refugees, and several Native Americans, among other youth participants. Building on the success of these projects, Barbara decided to spearhead a grassroots organization to help refugees better acculturate to American society. The network, made up of refugees and volunteers, is called Iskash*taa Refugee Harvesting Network, which means "working cooperatively together" in Somali, one of the languages of the Somali Bantu refugees. The program has evolved into an annual harvest of ~30,000 pounds of fruit and vegetables from backyards and local farms.

Dr. Eiswerth moderates the Tucson Refugee Yahoo group (over 240 members), is a member of the Interfaith Noor Women's Association, founding and active member of Tucson's Refugee Immigrant Service Provider Network, and serves on the Tucson Unlearning Racism and Diversity Task Force at Saint Francis in the Foothills UMC.

■ MARK HETFIELD

*Senior Vice President for Policy and Programs
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)*

Mark Hetfield, Senior Vice President for Policy and Programs at HIAS, the international migration agency of the American Jewish community, is serving his fourth non-consecutive position at the organization, for which he has worked in Rome, New York and Washington. For three years prior to rejoining HIAS in April of 2006, Mr. Hetfield was on the staff of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, where he was the Commission's senior advisor on refugee issues. While there, he specialized in the intersection of religious freedom and refugee law, and directed a comprehensive study, authorized by Congress, on the treatment of asylum seekers in Expedited Removal, released in February 2005.

In addition, Mr. Hetfield served for five years in the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington and at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. He also practiced immigration law while associated with the Washington D.C. office of the law firm, Fulbright and Jaworski. Mr. Hetfield received his juris doctor as well as his Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service (BSFS) from Georgetown University.

■ TAMAR JACOBY

*President & CEO
ImmigrationWorks USA*

Tamar Jacoby is president and CEO of ImmigrationWorks USA, a national federation of local coalitions working to advance immigration reform.

A nationally known journalist and author, from 1989 to 2007, she was a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, where she wrote and commented extensively on immigration and played a leading role in Washington advancing immigration reform.

Her articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, National Review, The Weekly Standard and Foreign Affairs, among other publications. She is a regular guest on national television and radio.

Her 1998 book, *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration*, tells the story of race relations in three American cities in the decades after the civil rights movement. A more recent book, *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means To Be American*, is a collection of essays arguing that we as a nation need to find new ways to talk about and encourage immigrant inclusion in the fabric of American life.

From 1987 to 1989, she was a senior writer and justice editor for Newsweek. Between 1981 and 1987, she was the deputy editor of The New York Times op-ed page. In 2004, she was appointed by the President to serve on the advisory board of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

■ CHRISTOPHER KOEHLER

*Director of ESL
St. James Cathedral*

Chris has been the director of the St. James ESL program in Seattle, WA for 15 years. During that time, he has overseen the growth of the program from a handful of ESL tutors and 4-5 staff to a program that annually serves over 250 clients each year, has more than 100 active volunteers, 5 full-time staff, and 3 part-time staff. Chris provides consultation in the areas of conflict management and board effectiveness. He has served on various boards including Shalom Bayit, Council for Basic Skills, King County Literacy Coalition (founding member), and the Bridlepath Homeowners Association. He is a former community mediator, Peace Corps and Vista volunteer, and holds a Master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership.

■ JEDD E. MEDEFIND

*Special Assistant to the President and Acting Director
White House Office of Faith-Based and Community
Initiatives*

Jedd Medefind serves as Special Assistant to the President and Acting Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. In this role, Medefind leads the White House Office and its partner Centers in eleven major Federal agencies to strengthen the work of frontline nonprofits and social entrepreneurs and ensure their role as central partners in any Federal effort that addresses human needs — from addiction, homelessness, prisoner reentry and at-risk youth to global HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Prior to his current role, Medefind served as Deputy Director of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI), managing the White House Office team and implementing Presidential priorities across the Federal government. He also served as Director of the FBCI Center at the U.S. Department of Labor, where he led efforts to expand the work of faith-based and other community groups in cutting crime and prisoner recidivism, boosting welfare-to-work efforts and helping individuals overcome poverty through successful employment.

Previously, Medefind filled a range of posts in the California State Legislature, including Communications Director and Chief of Staff in the State Senate and State Assembly. He also helped create and lead the California Community Renewal Project, which provides resources and training to organizations that serve the state's most challenged communities.

Medefind has worked, studied and served in more than thirty countries, including projects in Guatemala, Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Lesotho and a number of other countries. He also worked for Price-Waterhouse Russia in Moscow.

The book *Four Souls*, which he wrote with three close friends, explores questions of faith, poverty and community amid a journey around the globe. His most recent book, *The Revolutionary Communicator*, examines the grace and greatness of Jesus' approach to communication and leadership.

Jedd and his wife Rachel and their two daughters live in Washington, D.C.

■ DR. ROBERT M. PONICHTERA

*Founder and Executive Director
Liberty's Promise*

Dr. Robert M. Ponichtera oversees the organization's day-to-day operations and devotes his time to creating a network of partners, generating publicity, and cultivating donors. Ponichtera has more than eight years of experience working for nonprofit organizations, guiding program direction, and fundraising activities. Before founding Liberty's Promise, Ponichtera worked at the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Freedom House and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where he wrote grants, coordinated program activities, and conducted research. Ponichtera earned a Ph.D. in East European History from Yale University in 1995 and has taught at Yale, Quinnipiac College, and Albertus Magnus College. He currently serves as an adjunct professor of history at George Mason University. Ponichtera and his wife, Renata, reside in Alexandria, Virginia, with their son, Anthony.

■ DAVID H. SIEGEL

*Acting Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement
Administration for Children & Families (ACF)
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS)*

David Siegel has contributed over thirty-five years to a career dedicated to public service. Currently, as Acting Director, HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement and as

a Senior Federal Executive, he is responsible for the overall executive level management and direction of refugee and humanitarian assistance programs. Previously and for the period August 2005-August 2007, David was the Deputy Associate Commissioner, Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), ACF. As Deputy, he provided management of and problem solving for a number of high visibility youth programs. David was the Deputy Commissioner, Office of Child Support Enforcement from 2002-2005. For the period November 2004-July 2005, David was the acting commissioner and was fully responsible for the operation of the nation's child support enforcement program. Previously he was the Director of Consumer Services with OCSE, responsible for external relations and consumer services. From 1986-1994, he was Deputy Director, Office of Public Affairs, HHS Administration for Children and Families. He was responsible for enhancing public understanding of the agency's mission to assist vulnerable children and families. From 1983-1986, David was Director, Office of Welfare Employment, Maryland Department of Human Resources. He directed the nationally recognized Maryland Employment Initiatives Program, one of the first large-scale state welfare-to-work programs aimed at enhancing family self-sufficiency.

Earlier in his career worked at various levels within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as in several state governments. David served as an Intelligence Officer in the US Air Force and was stationed in Taipei, Taiwan, from 1970-1972. He has a Master's Degree in Public Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh and a Bachelor's Degree from Rutgers University. He is married and has a daughter studying for her Master's Degree in Social Work.

■ JENNIFER L. SPORZYNSKI

Director

StartSmart at Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Jennifer Sporzynski has 16 years of experience in economic development, working with microenterprises in the United States, Guatemala, and Paraguay. As Director of StartSmart she serves as coordinator, trainer, and business coach to refugee and immigrant entrepreneurs starting or expanding small businesses in Maine. Prior to joining CEI she worked as a business consultant with The ICA Group, a national non-profit that helps create worker-owned businesses, thereby creating jobs and assets for low-income neighborhoods. She has taught courses in microenterprise and economic literacy to low-income and immigrant populations and has collaborated with several Boston-area Community Development Corporations on technical assistance and program evaluation.

Jennifer serves on Maine’s State Advisory Council for Multicultural Affairs and was a co-recipient for the 2008 SBA Minority Small Business Champion in Maine. Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Vermont and a Master of Education degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

